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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

G o v. O D E N B O W I E

TO THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF

M A R Y L A N D .

—•—
January 8th, 1868.
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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

Gentlemen of the General Assembly of Maryland :

It augurs well, let us hope, that on this 8th of January, a day memorable in the annals of our country, the first Executive elected under the new Constitution of the re-enfranchised people of Maryland, has, by the provisions of that instrument, to be inaugurated. The coincidence is the more auspicious as it is altogether fortuitous, and not specially designed by its framers.

It is entirely unnecessary that I should on this occasion conform to the general custom of intimating any suggestions upon matters of State legislation, because of the Constitution providing that I shall not enter upon the discharge of the Executive duties "until the expiration of the term for which the present Executive was elected," and also because he has in his annual Message so ably and exhaustively called the attention of your honorable bodies to whatever may affect the best interest of the State.

But such is the disturbed and unsatisfactory condition of the national affairs that the people of Maryland will naturally expect that their views, as expressed with singular unanimity at the recent election, shall be avowed to the country.

The restoration of the Southern States to their proper position in the Union ; their representation in Congress by such representatives as they may by their proper suffrages, uncontrolled by the bayonet, select ; the control of suffrage and all other local or domestic questions, which the Federal Constitution does not expressly regulate, by the States themselves ; white supremacy the country over, not negro equality here in the North, and negro domination there in the South ; negro suffrage only in those States the white voters of which may determine to elevate the negro to their own level—the rigid subordination of military to civil authority—the restoration of the whole people to all their rights—the return at the earliest practicable day to the constitutional currency of gold and silver—a fairer adjustment of our revenue laws—a decrease of taxation—the revival of agriculture, commerce,

industry and trade throughout the whole country—the cultivation of amity and concord and fraternal love between the States and all the people of the Union—*peace in fact as in name*—these are the aspirations which the people cherish, these are the lessons taught by the election in Maryland, as in the great States of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky and New Jersey, the golden State of California, and first in the smaller, but no less patriotic States of Connecticut and Delaware.

Of fanaticism, of crime, of bloodshed, we have had more than enough—enough of self-abasement for self advancement—too much of mere party strife. Patriotism should now awaken us to the true and material interests of the country.

As our fathers in the past intended no such result, the present will never consent, the future will never permit, that ten States of the Union, already desolate and depressed, shall be dismembered and absolutely surrendered to discord, despotism and destruction; or that military usurpation shall ignore the rights of our own race, professedly in the interest, but really in the ruin of the negro. He should be, as he is, the object of our sympathies. He should be, as he is, protected in all his rights. But he should not, as he never will, be made the equal of or the ruler over the white man. Experience has demonstrated that a wise God has stamped him with the seal of inferiority. Let not man affect greater wisdom than his Creator.

As the results of these elections should not and cannot be regarded as mere party triumphs, we should, by wise and moderate counsels, seek to perpetuate and utilize them in the interest and for the good of our common country. We must conciliate good will and command respect by ignoring the irritating features of the past, and be influenced alone by what patriotism may exact for the present and future welfare of the nation. Animated by a liberal and comprehensive spirit, we must seek to settle public tranquility on a solid and enduring foundation. National harmony between the two sections, harmony between the two races, is what the interests of the country demand, and what the people covet. Common sense, common honesty, true statesmanship, will conform to these requirements, and living ideas, just and suitable to the times, must supercede the fanatical and vindictive crusade which has lately characterized the action of Congress.

The issue made up between President Johnson and Congress must be regarded as decided. The sacrifice of a million of men will not result in the bloody burial of that sacred instrument, the Constitution, sacrilegiously derided as “a piece of waste paper.” This has been the people’s response to their President’s appeal from the iniquitous action of Con-

gress. Braving a tempest of obloquy, and clinging with a tenacity to the doctrine of the equality of the States and the inviolability of the Union, the madness which for a time ruled the hour and disturbed the public judgment, has in the end been dissipated by the people's endorsement of his honesty, fearlessness and patriotism.

It is for the people to pass in judgment upon their servants. They approve the honest and faithful. They condemn the corrupt and faithless. We cannot mistake or disregard when they speak, as we have recently heard them through the ballot-box. That voice in defence of the Constitution, and in support of its defender, has pulsed every patriotic heart. It has infused hopes, and courage, and cheerfulness into every patriot's breast. It has proven that in the hour of danger, when all looks darkest and hope is well nigh gone, that the people may ever be depended on to maintain their blood-bought and priceless heritage.

It is a matter of painful and mortifying regret that partisan feeling should have been allowed such sway as to culminate in the Impeachment report. There is no pretence, even in this document, that the President had committed any indictable offence for which a private citizen could be legally punished. The general sense of common fairness and public justice therefore, was so violated, that what might have been a heinous crime, speedily degenerated into a monstrous and mischievous farce when the actors in it realized the popular sentiment, and its demand for a release from further agitation.

The same indignity perpetrated upon the nation in the person of its President, has been visited upon the State of Maryland through her chosen representative to the United States Senate. One of her purest citizens, ablest statesmen and most honored sons, has for a year been denied admission into that body, and the State, in this vital period of our country's history, been deprived of her representation in violation of an expressed constitutional guarantee. But impeachment being probably disposed of, it may be hoped that the charges against Governor Thomas will be satisfactorily determined, and as there will be no need to prevent his sitting in judgment upon the President, that he may be allowed to discharge his duty to his State and the country as a Senator.

The condition of the South is now such that one would suppose, if the dictates of statesmanship did not change the policy of Congress, the impulses of common humanity would stay their hands. With little left for vengeance or malignity to wreak itself upon, or cupidity to seize, the most embittered enemies should be satisfied with the fullness of their work. Can they, without emotions of sympathy, look upon a people proverbial for all social virtues, for kindness and

hospitality, for excessive endurance and great gallantry, dissevered from the Union, and reduced to a state of anarchy and political despair? Can they forget the great aid of these very people, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," in the establishment of American Independence? and that since our national existence until the recent deplorable civil war, which the whole country may well ask itself if the South was *alone* responsible for, her heroes in war and statesmen in peace have equally with their Northern brethren exerted themselves that every star upon the National ensign shall be emblematic of the position each State shall be entitled to hold as a free and independent member of the National Union?

Whilst this must be the feeling of the whole North for the whole South, how much more intensified must it be with us of Maryland, for our neighboring and sister State of Virginia, united to us by all the ties of consanguinity, of social intercourse, of business relations, and the proud and pleasant memories of the past? The overthrow of her white population by a black minority, led by men who are a disgrace to their race; the loss of thousands of her people and millions of her property; the severance of a third of her territory after, in her exuberant patriotism and generous greatness, she had voluntarily given to the country that immense Northwestern territory, out of which have been carved the States that have become the seat of empire, and which would have so humiliated and destroyed her; her degradation from the "Mother of States" to "Military District No. 1," are circumstances that we most keenly feel.

We cannot cease to remember and to partake of her pride that hers is the land of Washington, the Father of his Country, whose birth and whose burial places our citizens daily look upon; of Henry, who demanded liberty for the country or death for himself; of Jefferson, of Madison, of Marshall, of the Lees, and a host of other worthies to whom we are so much indebted for our national greatness.

As Marylanders, then, we must feel a peculiar sympathy for Virginia, which we could not repress if we would, and would not if we could. As a people, we will gladly contribute out of our abundance to the wants of hers, and as a State we will bid her take heart in the sympathies and returning good sense of the nation, and we will not cease to maintain and defend her rights until they shall have been restored uncurtailed.

And so with all the other States of the South. The war, professedly waged for the restoration of the Union, having successfully ended, *must result in the restoration of the Union.*

In this the fiat of the American people has unmistakably gone forth. Time only is necessary to show to our sisters of the South that our sympathies are not alone for patriotic

Poland, writhing under the iron heel of her master—for misgoverned and chafing Ireland—for hapless and valiant Crete—or for the struggling everywhere except in our own midst. Justice to them, to ourselves, to the interests of the country, will speedily assure to the Southern States all their political and territorial rights.

Let theirs be a position of “masterly inactivity,” voting down such instruments miscalled Constitutions, as may be submitted to them by their mongrel Conventions of negroes and adventurers, and their proper status will ere long be restored to them by wise and just national legislation, on which alone they must rely.

National legislation must be directed not only to the restoration of the dissevered States to their proper orbits, and to the pacification of the country, but to its financial condition and necessities. *The burdens of war must be relieved by the return of peace.*

A resumption of specie payments—a large decrease of taxation—a reduction of the tariff—a modification or extinction of the income tax, and of taxes on most manufactures, will infuse vigor into the enterprise of the country ; will give renewed impulse to the mechanic arts, to the building of houses and factories ; will revive trade ; will enable our shipping to resume its march upon the deep ; will greatly reduce the cost of the necessaries of life, and largely relieve the toiling masses, a proper alleviation of whose burthens should always be the study of the wise and considerate legislator.

The demands of agriculture, upon which all the other great interests of the country depend, require that the disturbance and disorder of the labor system of the Southern and Middle States shall be diverted back from the field of politics and vicious idleness into which the freedmen have been inclined, to the steady pursuits of productive industry. Thousands of acres of the best lands of the country are lying uncultivated and unproductive, and mines of wealth which the great agricultural staples would produce lost, not because of the scarcity of laborers, but because they have been seduced from their patient habits of industry by the introduction of politics among them, and by the outrageous support of them in idleness and vice by Freedmen’s Bureaus and Government employment, which has no relief or occupation even for the widows and orphans of the war unless of sable hue.

As an agriculturalist myself, this labor question is to me one of great interest, and whilst I would compel the idle freedmen to become a producer instead of a consumer, I would commend to the young men of Maryland, as of the South, the necessity of themselves seizing hold of agricultural as they did of warlike implements, if they would not see their ancestral acres pass into other and strangers’ hands. The intelligent, directing labor of the owner of the land is essential to

the changed system which must needs occur in our agriculture, and let no one be deterred by a foolish pride, but rather let him be impelled to act by the conviction that labor is as honorable and much more remunerative in the creative as in the destructive arts.

What we in Maryland, as in the South, most need is immigration. Immigration increases population, and with it wealth. Let our efforts be to attract capital, energy and industry, by every political and social facility and courtesy. Let every desirable new-comer receive a full, frank and cordial welcome, and no one be ostracised because of sectional animosities. Soon they will be absorbed in our population, imbued with our own habits and ideas, and with our own young men, who will not desert their State, build up our waste places, and make the land of Maryland to blossom as the rose. No fairer spot on earth can claim their attention, if they only evince the will and the energy for her development.

I have been deterred by motives of delicacy, as well as because the comprehensive message of our present honored Executive to your honorable bodies had made it unnecessary, from consuming any of your time with suggestions upon matters of State legislation. This will be my duty and my pleasure on future occasions. But it will not, I trust, be deemed out of place or improper, if here in my first official act I make the assurance that in the discharge of all my duties I shall strive to be the Executive of the State, and not the official of a party. Nor will it be considered, I hope, improper in me to caution you, as the representatives of the best interests of the State, that the Democratic party has in its representation in Maryland that excess of power most dangerous to all parties. Your opponents have not a single representative in either branch of the Assembly. This of itself will, I am confident, be sufficient to excite magnanimity and generosity in your political legislation, as it should surely warn you against political excesses and any divergence from right in the mere interest of party or person.

Profoundly impressed with the responsibilities and duties which the people of Maryland have devolved upon me, and relying trustfully upon a Power on which all men should lean, and rulers more than all other men, for guidance and support, I am here in obedience to the Constitution to take the oath of office it requires.

